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Christian Democrats Seek Out Fraternal Political Parties

The world-wide conference of the Christian Democratic movement held in Rome last month underscored the disunity and declining importance of this international movement which includes some fifty parties or groups. The traditional differences between the mostly minuscule Latin American organizations--radical and anti-US--and established West European parties was compounded by differences among the West Europeans themselves.

One of the principal concerns of the West European parties is the possibility of the Communists coming to power in Italy but the parties differ in their emphasis on this issue. In addition, the centrist Christian Democratic parties like the Dutch are far more open to the need for social and economic reform than some of the fraternal parties. Moreover, the straightforward, doctrinal positions of West German leaders contrast with the often pragmatic approach to ideology of the Italians, a contrast which may account for the noted lack of empathy between the two parties.

The anti-Communist, pro-reform character of the Christian Democratic movement has faded in recent years. The records of the public debate at the Rome congress, for example, show little mention of Communism except for one strong anti-Communist address by a West German representative and the remarks of emigre representatives from Eastern Europe.

Political trends in a number of West European countries may facilitate alliances between the Christian Democrats and European conservative

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parties with no church connection. An effort in this direction has been stimulated this year by the prospect of direct election to the European Parliament, now set for the spring of 1978. In the present appointed 198-seat parliament, Socialists hold 67 seats; Christian Democrats, 51; and Conservatives, including Gaullists, 34.

The leaders proposing a conservative alliance are also interested in finding a vehicle to compete with the Socialist International, which Social Democratic leaders Brandt, Kreisky and Palme have been trying to use as a device for coordinating action, such as their effort to influence developments in Spain and Portugal.

In recent months organization meetings looking toward a conservative alliance have been attended by West German Christian Democratic Chairman Kohl, Christian Social Union Chairman Strauss, Amaro da Costa of the Portuguese Central Democratic Social Party, Josef Taus of the Austrian People's Party, Kai Uwe von Hassel as President of the European Union of Christian Democrats, UK Conservative leader William Whitelaw, Jean-Marie Daillet of the French Democratic Centrists, Arnold Koller of the Swiss People's Party, and Goesta Bohman of the Swedish Conservative Party.

The West Germans in particular are pushing this cause. They have drafted a program for a transnational European People's party which, with an eye to direct elections to the European parliament, is envisioned as uniting eligible national parties from EC countries. The West Germans also propose a European Democratic Center, which would include parties from non-EC countries.

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EC Tardy on Improving Trade Terms for Portugal

The EC will be unable to meet Portugal's desire to begin talks by the end of this year on improving trade relations.

The community is proceeding with plans for various direct financial aid projects to Portugal, but member-state resistance to liberalizing one or another aspect of the existing trade agreement is preventing the EC from coming up with a new negotiating mandate. Better prospects for Portuguese exports would give Lisbon a psychological, as well as an economic, boost.

At an EC Council meeting this week, France opposed easing restrictions on Portuguese wines, Britain objected to more textile imports, and West Germany spoke against further increases in social security benefits to Portuguese workers in the community.

Community officials still hope that a Council meeting in January will take favorable action, but high-level political decisions by EC leaders--based on a judgment that Portugal now requires a sign of European approval--may be needed to overcome budgetary constraints and trade protectionism.

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Independent of EC programs, a long-promised German-Portuguese aid agreement was signed last week. Bonn is giving Lisbon about $27 million for specified agricultural development projects.

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Law of the Sea

Two more countries have moved to establish control over a 200-mile zone off their coasts following the lead of nearly a dozen other Latin American countries. President Echeverria took steps last month to establish a 200-mile economic zone, giving Mexico control over all mineral and living resources within this area. In mid-October Iceland declared a 200-mile preferential fishing zone. Japan, the USSR and others fear that such unilateral steps could prompt other nations to claim a 200-mile zone and undermine efforts to reach an international consensus at the Law of the Sea Conference.

During the April-May 1975 session of the conference in Geneva, most nations agreed that coastal states should have exclusive control over petroleum and other seabed mineral resources, and the right to manage coastal fisheries out to 200 miles. The key questions of who may harvest the unutilized portion of the coastal fishing stock and in what amounts are still unsettled. Several other major issues remain to be resolved:

--The precise legal status of the economic zone, and residual rights of states which have heretofore operated in the area, affecting such important topics as freedom of navigation, marine scientific research, and control over marine pollution within the economic zone.

--The rights of landlocked and geographically disadvantaged states to fish in the economic zone of neighboring coastal states.

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--Regional management and conservation measures for highly migratory species of fish.

Uncertainty as to whether an international forum could resolve these issues probably was a major factor contributing to recent declarations by Mexico and Iceland. Other nations will follow suit unless substantial progress is made in the session scheduled for March in New York. If the conference falters, both unilateral declarations and a series of bilateral agreements on Law of the Sea matters will be taken outside the auspices of the conference.

Unilateral moves are most likely in countries where there are problems concerning the conservation of fishing resources. Even Japan, who has long voiced opposition to unilateral declarations, is under intense domestic pressure to unilaterally extend its territorial waters to 12 miles to curb activity of the Soviet fishing fleet.

Nations such as Canada, whose waters are heavily fished by foreign fleets, can be expected to claim the right to manage all living and mineral resources out to 200 miles. Certain Latin American countries also concerned about depleted fishing resources and national control of offshore minerals may take similar unilateral actions. At the same time, major fishing nations such as the USSR will probably seek a series of bilateral agreements to protect their access to traditional fishing grounds. 25X1

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UK-Iceland Fishing Dispute Escalates

The incident today in which an Icelandic patrol boat collided with and fired at two British support ships inside the 12-mile limit, represents a major escalation of the fishing dispute and will increase pressures on the Icelandic government to seek support from its NATO allies and to raise the issue at the UN.

British officials had hoped to avoid serious incidents during the NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting currently under way in Brussels. London feared that an incident at sea would embroil NATO directly in the dispute and prompt Icelandic Foreign Minister Agustsson to demand that the North Atlantic allies support Iceland. Agustsson had intended, according to the US embassy in Reykjavik, to make a relatively moderate plea for support. NATO officials also hoped that tensions could be eased if Agustsson and British Foreign Minister Callaghan agreed to reopen the stalled talks on a new fishing agreement.

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According to British officials, Callaghan is not prepared to make concessions on the main sticking point--the size of the British catch--in the event he meets with Agustsson. The British have told Icelandic officials that they will reduce their demands if Reykjavik raises its standing offer of 65,000 tons to a figure approaching the 110,000 tons demanded by London.

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